



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
MARINE CORPS RECRUIT DEPOT  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92140

DepO 12531.4B  
1B:KSZ:jj  
9 June 1983

DEPOT ORDER 12531.4B

From: Commanding General  
To: Distribution List

Subj: Within-Grade Increases - General Schedule (GS) Employees

Ref: (a) FPM 990-2, Book 531  
(b) CPI 531, S4  
(c) DepO 12431.1

1. Purpose. To publish information and guidelines to be utilized in processing within-grade increases of civil service general schedule employees. These guidelines are published as a supplement to instructions contained in references (a) and (b).

✓ 2. Cancellation. DepO 12531.4A.

3. Policy

a. Within-grade increases will be utilized to motivate employees to perform continuously at their full capacity and to ensure that every employee is paid no more than is warranted by the degree of competence with which he or she performs assignments.

b. Within-grade salary increases will be granted only to those employees who, at the time of meeting the other procedural requirements for a within-grade increase, have demonstrated an acceptable level of competence in the work to which assigned.

c. Supervisory personnel responsible for the approval of within-grade increases will assure that they are not granted on a purely automatic basis, and that, in each instance, the employee's work reflects an acceptable level of competence.

d. Within-grade increases for employees whose work is not at an acceptable level of competence will be deferred until such time as their work reaches an acceptable level of competence.

e. Supervisors will give all possible assistance in improving the job performance of employees whose work falls below an acceptable level.

4. Definitions

a. Acceptable Level of Competence. A level of performance identified by the employing activity at which the performance by an employee of the duties and responsibilities of his or her assigned position is fully acceptable. This equates to a rating of at least "satisfactory" for all "critical elements" identified for the position. Employees not performing satisfactorily in all critical elements of their positions are not performing at an acceptable level of competence.

b. Calendar Week. Means a period of any seven consecutive calendar days.

c. Critical Element. Means any requirement of the job which is sufficiently important that inadequate performance of it outweighs acceptable or better performance in other aspects of the job.

d. Equivalent Increase. Means an increase or increases in an employee's rate of basic pay equal to or greater than the amount of a within-grade increase from the specific step of the grade of the position occupied by the employee before the increase to the next step of the grade of that position.

e. Rate of Basic Pay. Means the rate of pay fixed by law or administrative action for the position held by an employee before any deductions and exclusive of additional pay of any kind.

f. Waiting Period. Means the minimum time requirement of creditable service to become eligible for consideration for a within-grade increase.

g. Within-Grade Increase. Means a periodic increase in an employee's rate of basic pay from one step of the grade of the employee's position to the next higher step of that grade.

5. Basic Requirements. An employee must meet the following requirements to be entitled to a within-grade increase.

a. The employee must have served the required waiting period for advancement to the next higher step of his or her grade;

b. The employee must have not received an equivalent increase during the prescribed waiting period; and

c. The employee's level of competence must have been certified by his or her supervisor to be acceptable.

6. Waiting Period

a. Length. The length of the waiting period varies with the step of the grade in which the employee is serving. Waiting periods are as follows:

(1) 52 calendar weeks of creditable service to go to step 2, 3, or 4;

(2) 104 calendar weeks of creditable service to go to step 5, 6, or 7; and

(3) 156 calendar weeks of creditable service to go to step 8, 9 or 10.

b. Commencement of a Waiting Period. A waiting period for a within-grade increase begins:

(1) Upon a new appointment to the Federal Service;

(2) Upon receiving an equivalent increase; or

(3) After a period of nonpay status or a break in service (alone or in combination) in excess of 52 calendar weeks.

7. Acceptable Level of Competence Determination

a. Before an employee can receive a within-grade increase his or her work performance must be of an acceptable level of competence. An acceptable level of competence determination shall be based on an employee's performance of the duties and responsibilities of his or her assigned position or positions during the waiting period except when:

(1) An employee has not been informed of the specific requirements for performance at an acceptable level of competence at least 30 days before the end of a waiting period; or

(2) An employee is reduced in grade because of unacceptable performance to a position in which, within 60 days, he or she is or will become eligible for consideration for a within-grade increase.

b. Under the above circumstances, the employee shall be informed that his or her determination is postponed and of the specific requirements for performance at an acceptable level of competence. Such postponements shall not exceed 90 days. A within-grade increase granted after such a postponement shall be retroactive to the original due date.

c. The fact that within-grade increases are linked to the performance appraisal system does not mean that a within-grade increase cannot be granted or withheld when an employee's performance changes during the interim period between the issuance of the performance appraisal and the end of the waiting period. For example, if an employee's most recent performance appraisal reflects performance which is at an acceptable level

of competence and at some time after issuance of the appraisal, but before the end of the waiting period, the employee's performance declines to an unacceptable, for within-grade increase purposes, the within-grade increase can be withheld. In order to withhold the employee's within-grade increase, a supplemental written statement must be submitted stating the reasons for withholding the increase. The same procedure applies if the employee receives a performance appraisal that reflects an unacceptable level of performance, and during the interim period the employee's performance improves to an acceptable level of competence for within-grade increase purposes.

8. Waiver of Requirement for Determination. An employee shall receive a within-grade increase when he or she has been in a duty status for less than 60 days during the final 52 calendar weeks of the waiting period or periods, because of paid leave, or because the employee received service credit under the back pay provisions of FPM Chapter 550. In such a situation there shall be a presumption that the employee would have performed at an acceptable level of competence during the waiting period had he or she been in a duty status sufficient time for a determination based on performance.

9. Withholding Within-Grade Increases. For instructions and guidance on withholding within-grade increases, refer to reference (c).

10. Effective Date

a. A within-grade increase shall be effective on the first day of the first pay period following completion of the required waiting period and in compliance with the conditions of eligibility. If a within-grade increase becomes due on the same date that the employee is to be promoted or changed to a lower grade, the increase is considered to have preceded the change to the new grade to give the employee the benefit of the within-grade increase.

b. When due to administrative error, oversight, or delay, a positive determination is made after the waiting period is completed, the effective date of the within-grade increase shall be retroactive to the original due date.

c. When an acceptable level of competence is achieved at some time after a negative determination, the effective date is the first day of the first pay period after the acceptable determination has been made.

11. Responsibilities


a. Civilian Personnel Office

(1) Notify supervisors by providing them with within-grade increase certifications at least 75 days before the due dates.

(2) Prepare Standard Form 50, "Notification of Personnel Action" to effect the within-grade increase when all eligibility requirements have been met.

b. Immediate Supervisors. Will return the certification of acceptable level of competence to the Civilian Personnel Office no later than the day following the end of the waiting period.

c. Second-Level Supervisors. Serve as reviewing officials for certifications. Their signatures below those of the immediate supervisors indicate their cognizance of and concurrence in the certification.

  
F. M. MANROD  
Chief of Staff

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